

## His Own Drummer by Madame\_Ashley

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**Summary:**

The Stonathan Marching Band AU you didn't know you needed / wanted. Angst and fluff between unlikely bandmates.

## His Own Drummer

Perched on the edge of a folding chair, he adjusted the sheet music on the stand out of habit; he had no actual intention of practicing the facile likes of “Hang On, Sloopy.” Trumpet in hand, Jonathan slouched back and took in the beige soundproof walls of the small rehearsal room. If he concentrated hard enough, he could fantasize the click of an invisible reel-to-reel, could smell the pungent smoulder of a cigarette settled in an imaginary ashtray.

This room was the reason that he’d joined the Hawkins High marching band in the first place. He could care less about the bombastic song selections, the bland choreography, the parades and football games. But he couldn’t resist the thought of unlimited access to this drab little space, where he could practice in peace and dream his way out of this lousy town.

He had just finished warming up with a Chet Baker number when there came a knock at the door. The unwelcome intrusion let himself in. “I hope I’m not interrupting anything,” Steve remarked sarcastically, gesturing at the empty room. He closed the door, and leaned against a padded wall, arms across his chest, drumsticks clutched in one hand.

Harrington had joined the band to improve his grade point average; his spot on the swim team wouldn’t be guaranteed otherwise. A coach had suggested that a decent mark in “some bird course” might do the trick and recommended him to Miss Wick, the music teacher. Steve’s presence had generated its share of unease among the other band members, who took an immediate dislike to the cocky interloper. He was a relentless clown and a flirt. A favourite stunt involved showing up to practice in his double-breasted performance jacket matched with a pair of scandalously brief track shorts. His explanation: “Miss, I had to run the 100m dash to get here on time – so I dressed for success.” This atrocious behaviour would have gotten him kicked out if Steve hadn’t proven to be such a quick study on the drum line, which only elevated his already substantial ego.

“Steve, what do you want?” Byers sighed, producing a cloth from his trumpet case and polishing the bell of his already spotless instrument

to busy his nervous hands.

“I wanted to apologize for yesterday. For your camera.”

“Okay,” Jonathan muttered, breathing onto some non-existent blemish on a brassy valve, and giving it a vigorous wipe with his cloth.

When Barb Holland had approached him about photographing the Hawkins High swim team for the school paper, Jonathan had initially turned her down. The arrogance of the team’s star was off-putting, but after some consideration, Byers’ curiosity got the better of him. Early Monday morning he stood in the shadows of the unlit pool bleachers, camera in hand, hoping to catch some candid shots of the swimmers. The meet hadn’t begun yet, and instead Jonathan happened upon the swim captain himself - alone and completing some leisurely laps.

Steve swam to the ladder and heaved his lithe body out of the pool. Jonathan’s heartbeat accelerated at the sight, but he managed to snap a half dozen shots before the flickering flash caught the attention of his subject.

Startled, Steve began shouting obscenities in the direction of the bleachers but paused when he glimpsed Jonathan’s face in the fluorescent light.

“Byers? Is that you?”

Jonathan rushed for the exit, tripping in his haste. The camera dangling from his neck fell against the concrete steps, smashing the lens, but at last he made his graceless escape.

“I’m sorry that I kind of freaked out.” Steve’s eyes paced the tiny rehearsal room in an uncharacteristic show of nerves. “I’ve just been on edge lately, you know...”

Jonathan nodded. No further explanation was needed. Everyone in Hawkins had been on edge since young Troy Harrington went missing five nights ago. Troy, who was about the same age as Byers’ own little brother.

“That song you were playing just now – what was it?” Steve asked, affecting a more casual tone while absently tapping the tip of a drumstick against his thigh.

“My Funny Valentine.”

“Huh, I wouldn’t have guessed that. It’s one of the saddest things I’ve ever heard.” He was evidently stalling but Jonathan couldn’t discern his motive. “Say, were you able to develop any of the shots you took?”

Byers gave him a slow, reluctant nod and rifled in his knapsack for the file folder. He handed it over without a word, wincing in anticipation of the shame that was sure to follow.

The photos had turned out better than Jonathan had expected, with no sign of the tremor that had possessed his hands while his eyes devoured Steve’s Speedo-clad form.

Steve took his time examining each shot before looking up. “These are really good. Are you going to use them for the paper?”

Jonathan gnawed on his thumbnail and shook his head, unable to meet Harrington’s gaze.

“You see, here you’ve really highlighted some of my finer points,” Steve snickered, waving a proof in Jonathan’s face. The photo showed Steve in profile, his toned arms, glistening shoulders and - Byers noted with a blush - the contours of Steve’s snug-fitting swimsuit.

“I shouldn’t have taken those without you knowing. I’m sorry.”

“No! They’re great! Can I keep this one?” Harrington held out a more modest shot of himself gazing across the pool, hands on hips. “For Nancy. For her locker maybe.”

Byers’ eyebrows shot up. “I don’t see why not,” he said, confused by Steve’s light-hearted manner. He took back the remaining photos. “I’m glad you like them, in spite of their obvious flaws...”

“Flaws?”

“Yeah, there wasn’t enough room in any of the shots to capture the magnitude of your vanity,” Jonathan chuckled.

“You’re an idiot, Jonathan Byers,” Steve said with a warm smile as he slipped out of the room.

Jonathan's eyes fell on the photographs. “And you’re beautiful, Steve Harrington,” he said, his voice soft despite the sound-proof room.

**Author's Note:**

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